

# Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

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## *FY 2015 Request for Applications (RFA)*

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** March 13, 2015

**ELIGIBILITY:** See Part III, A of RFA



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

National Institute  
of Food and  
Agriculture

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.311**.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on March 13, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: [Policy@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:Policy@nifa.usda.gov). (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program RFA**.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** NIFA requests applications for the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)** for fiscal year (FY) **2015** to support the development of educational outreach curricula, workshops, educational teams, training, and technical assistance programs to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States and its territories with entering, establishing, building and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. The amount available for support of this program in FY **2015** is approximately **\$18.54 million**.

This notice identifies the objectives for BFRDP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a BFRDP grant.

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## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

Section 7405(c) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171) (7 U.S.C. 3319f(c)), as amended by section 7410 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246) and section 7409 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-333), requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program for the purpose of providing education, outreach, training and technical assistance to benefit beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States, including programs and services (as appropriate) relating to:

- A. Basic livestock, forest management, and crop farming practices;
- B. Innovative farm, ranch, and private, nonindustrial forest land transfer strategies;
- C. Entrepreneurship and business training;
- D. Financial and risk management training (including the acquisition and management of agricultural credit);
- E. Natural resource management and planning;
- F. Diversification and marketing strategies;
- G. Curriculum development;
- H. Mentoring, apprenticeships, and internships;
- I. Resources and referral;
- J. Farm financial benchmarking;
- K. Assisting beginning farmers or ranchers in acquiring land from retiring farmers and ranchers;
- L. Agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veterans;
- M. Farm safety and awareness; and
- N. Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers.

Section 7405(d) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319f(d)) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish beginning farmer and rancher education teams to develop curricula and conduct educational programs and workshops for beginning farmers or ranchers in diverse geographical areas of the United States.

Section 7405(e) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319f(e)) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an online clearinghouse that makes available to beginning farmers or ranchers education curricula, training materials and programs, which may include online courses for direct use by beginning farmers or ranchers.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is aligned with the USDA Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan ([http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA\\_2014\\_REE\\_Action\\_Plan\\_08-2014\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_2014_REE_Action_Plan_08-2014_Final.pdf)), and specifically addresses Goal 6 – Education and Science Literacy, by providing educational and training opportunities to beginning farmers and ranchers. BFRDP is aligned with the NIFA Strategic plan ([http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat\\_plan\\_2014.pdf](http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf)), and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1 (Science), by advancing our ability to fight hunger and ensure global food security (Subgoal 1.1).

NIFA has invited stakeholder input on BFRDP via webinars, conference calls, and written means every year since the program began in FY 2009. For the FY 2015 RFA, stakeholder input was solicited until July 3, 2014. Stakeholder input was received by emails, comments during a stakeholder conference call on June 26, 2014, and at a meeting with the USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers on June 24, 2014. The written input is posted at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html>.

## **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The primary goal of BFRDP is to enhance food security, community development and sustainability by providing beginning farmer and ranchers (includes beginning managers of private, nonindustrial forest land, hereafter) and their families in the United States and its territories with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability. The term “farmer” is used in the broadest sense and should be interpreted to include agricultural farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forest owners and managers. **Applications from partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach will be given priority in funding.**

The expected short-term (five year) outcomes of BFRDP are the training and development of more than 60,000 beginning farmers and ranchers through the evaluation, development and use of beginning farmer and rancher education curricula and support for programs that address the various needs of different audiences and geographical areas (“educational enhancement” projects); and projects that support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers on topics described further in this RFA (“standard” projects).

### **1. Target Audience:**

The target audience for BFRDP is farmers and ranchers who have not operated a farm or ranch, or have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years. In addition, a portion of BFRDP funding is set aside for projects that address the needs of two subsets of beginning farmers and ranchers:

- At least 5 percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of limited resource beginning farmers and ranchers; socially disadvantaged beginning farmers or ranchers; immigrant farm workers planning to become beginning farmers or ranchers; and/or other farm workers desiring to become beginning farmers or ranchers.
- At least 5 percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers who are military veterans. A recipient of such a grant may coordinate with a recipient of a grant from the AgrAbility program (<http://www.agrability.org/>) in addressing the needs of veteran farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

**Please note: Not all applications need to address the needs of these two set-aside categories.**

For your application to be considered under either set-aside audience category, you must:

- a. Identify the target audience of any of the groups identified above and state what percentage of your project will be allocated to serving these group(s);
- b. Explain how the beginning farmers and ranchers in the identified target audience will be recruited and provided with appropriate training, education, outreach and/or mentoring; and
- c. Provide evidence of your ability to serve the needs of the identified audience, e.g., a strong track record of having previously done so.

## **2. Priority Topics for FY 2015:**

To achieve program goals, BFRDP projects will be expected to conduct training and assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers on one or more of the topics listed below, making use of existing curriculum (whether USDA funded or not) or developing new curriculum where needed. Applicants should carefully consider the topics that will be addressed by the proposed project and clearly identify the topics that will be addressed in the project narrative, and why those topics are the most appropriate for the project's audience. The priority topics are:

- A. Basic livestock, forest management, and crop farming practices;
- B. Innovative farm, ranch, and private, nonindustrial forest land transfer strategies;
- C. Entrepreneurship and business training;
- D. Financial and risk management training (including the acquisition and management of agricultural credit);
- E. Natural resource management and planning;
- F. Diversification and marketing strategies;
- G. Curriculum development;
- H. Mentoring, apprenticeships, and internships;
- I. Resources and referral;
- J. Farm financial benchmarking;
- K. Assisting beginning farmers or ranchers in acquiring land from retiring farmers and ranchers;
- L. Agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veterans;
- M. Farm safety and awareness; and
- N. Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the BFRDP under the following areas:

- (1) Standard Grants and**
- (2) Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs)**

### **C. Program Area Description**

#### **(1) Standard Grant**

**Program Code: BFRDA**

**Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard**

**Maximum Award: \$250,000 per year for up to three (3) years**

Standard BFRDP projects support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers, on the priority topics listed above. Most of the funding in the BFRDP goes to Standard Grants. The primary goal of Standard Grants is to increase the number of beginning farmers and ranchers and enhance their sustainability by providing them and their families the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions. Priority is given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer training and outreach. Standard Grant applications are expected to identify the audience of beginning farmers and ranchers that they aim to serve, describe their characteristics and needs, demonstrate knowledge and experience in educational and assistance methods that are appropriate and effective in engaging the audience and meeting their needs, and propose an ambitious yet achievable plan of work that will accomplish meaningful and measurable success in enhancing the number and success of beginning farmers and ranchers. Most successful standard grants provide training and assistance on a range of topics, including financial, production and marketing topics from the priority list above.

**(2) Educational Enhancement Team (EET)**

**Program Code: BFRDB**

**Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement**

**Maximum Award: \$200,000 per year for up to four (4) years**

The purpose of an Educational Enhancement Team (EET) grant is to assemble a team of experts to review beginning farmer and rancher curricula and programs (including review and evaluation of previously-funded BFRDP projects), identify gaps, and develop, disseminate and facilitate the use of materials and tools to address these gaps. Educational Enhancement Teams are not designed to train beginning farmers and ranchers directly, but rather to train-the-trainers and help enhance funded and non-funded beginning farmer and rancher education programs in the nation. Applicants interested in applying for an EET grant are strongly encouraged to contact the programmatic contacts listed in Part VII to discuss the suitability of the topic prior to submitting an application. Priority will be given to EET proposals that:

- Evaluate clusters of related projects previously funded by BFRDP, in order to determine lessons learned and best practices, along with curriculum and tools for future use. Clusters may be identified by topic, region, or audience.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration among all BFRDP grants in a given Region (where Region is defined as in the Definitions section, below), and facilitate their interaction with other Regional programs (e.g., Regional Rural Development

Centers, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, Risk Management Education) and the national BFRDP Clearinghouse.

- Address topics that complement or leverage rather than duplicate work completed by previously-funded EETs, which have addressed environmental management and leadership, regional networks, farmer-to-farmer curricula, financial management, individual development accounts, and farm safety. See Results and Impacts at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html> for more information on these projects.

To achieve program goals, EET proposals will be expected to demonstrate the ability to complete all of the following:

1) Assess and Identify Existing Curricula and Gaps in the Education, Training and Mentoring of Beginning Farmers and Ranchers:

- a) Establish educational teams that encompass broad geographic, product, topic and/or other appropriate scale. Educational teams should include, if possible, specialists (including Extension, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO), Community-based Organizations (CBO), School-based Agricultural Education organizations (SAEO), and Federal and State Government employees and other eligible partners) with knowledge and expertise in relevant subjects and programs serving beginning farmers or ranchers. The team should, if possible, use the expertise of officers and employees of the Department of Agriculture (excluding NIFA) with direct experience in programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that may be taught as part of the curriculum for the program or workshop, including (but not limited to) Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. Employees of other federal agencies may also be appropriate for inclusion on Educational Enhancement Teams. Applicants are also encouraged to coordinate with their StrikeForce area coordinators and/or partnering entities. USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative is part of our commitment to growing economies, increasing investments and creating opportunities in poverty-stricken rural communities. See [www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=STRIKE\\_FORCE](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=STRIKE_FORCE) for more information.
- b) Collect and synthesize information about the available beginning farmer and rancher education, training, outreach and mentoring curricula (including but not exclusive of curricula funded by USDA) and different audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers based on crop/livestock/product or regional diversity; including access to and suitability of programs to veterans and to limited resource and/or socially disadvantaged beginning farmers and ranchers, and farm workers desiring to become farmers or ranchers. Identify gaps in the existing education, training, outreach and mentoring curricula to address the needs of the different audiences.
- c) Evaluate the beginning farmer and rancher education, training, outreach and mentoring programs (including but not exclusively USDA funded) nationwide to identify what is and what is not successful regarding programs and services offered. Depending on the project, success can be measured in different ways, including numbers of participants

who completed training, began to farm, continued to farm, adopted different production, marketing and/or business practices, etc. Incorporate these findings to guide curriculum and program development in future years.

2) Develop Curricula and Train-the-Trainer Programs to Fill Identified Gaps:

- a) Develop curriculum to address the gaps in existing education, training, outreach and mentoring programs. The Educational Enhancement Teams should ensure that the new curriculum includes modules designed for specific audiences of beginning farmers or ranchers based on their crop/livestock/product (or potential crop/livestock/product/market), regional diversity, or other characteristics (e.g., military veterans, limited-resource or socially-disadvantaged, or farmworkers).
- b) Develop and implement train-the-trainer meetings and workshops, both in-person and online, based on the EET-identified and EET-developed curricula, for education, training, outreach and mentoring programs.

**Note:** The development of both curriculum and train-the-trainer programs should include collaboration with intended audiences (including education/training programs and the ultimate audiences for those programs, that is, beginning farmers and ranchers), pilot testing and formative evaluation, and refinement based on the results of the evaluation.

3) Assist Beginning Farmer and Rancher Training Programs by Collaborating with the Clearinghouse and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Education Providers:

- a) Collaborate with the Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse to incorporate curricula identified and/or developed by the EET into the Clearinghouse and to facilitate its sharing with education, training, outreach and mentoring programs.
- b) Facilitate communication and collaboration among all of the beginning farmer and rancher training, education, mentoring and outreach programs, and with the Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse, to enhance successful use of the EET curricula and training in education, training, outreach and mentoring programs.

Educational Enhancement Teams should identify the Project Director (PD) or Co-PD who will be responsible for coordination with the Clearinghouse and with the other funded programs. The submitted budget should reflect the required time and resources (e.g., monthly conference calls, annual in-person meetings) for this coordination.

## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$18.54 million.

The funds for Standard Projects will be awarded through a grant. The funds for an Educational Enhancement Team may be awarded through a grant, or through a cooperative agreement that includes substantial involvement of NIFA staff. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method\\_of\\_payment.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html).

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2015, you may submit applications to the BFRDP Program as one of the following types of requests:

**New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the BFRDP Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

**Renewal application.** This is a project application that requests funding for a project from a PD or co-PD who has received a prior BFRDP award. Applications for renewed funding must contain the same information as required for new applications; they also must contain a Progress Report and an additional one-page “Accomplishment-Based Renewal” narrative (see Project Narrative, Part IV). Renewal applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications, plus based on performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) and adequacy of plans for continuous improvement. Evaluation of performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) will include the outcomes achieved and (where appropriate) contributions to the BFRDP Clearinghouse.

**Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the BFRDP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

**Resubmitted renewal application.** This is a project application that had previously been submitted for renewal to the BFRDP Program but not funded. Therefore, PDs must provide a Progress Report and “Accomplishment-Based Renewal” narrative as required under the Project

Narrative, Part IV, and must respond to the previous review panel summary as required under Response to Previous Review, Part IV. Resubmitted renewal applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the areas to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as Renewal applications.

### **C. Project Types**

Applications will be accepted for two (2) project types: (1) Standard BFRDP Projects; (2) Educational Enhancement Team Projects.

#### **1. Standard BFRDP Projects:**

##### **(a) Standard Grants:**

The long-term goals of the Standard BFRDP projects are to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, training, mentoring and outreach programs that enhance self-employment in farming, ranching and forestry opportunities. Applications that seek to develop coursework for credit at Colleges and Universities offering four-year degree programs are not appropriate for this program and will not be accepted for review. Applications that seek to educate students for careers in agriculture other than as farmers or ranchers will not be accepted for review. Priority topics are the fourteen topics listed as A. through N. in the Legislative Background (Part I.A of this RFA) and again under Priority Topics for Standard BFRDP Projects (Part I.B.2.a of this RFA).

All work must be completed within three (3) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is three (3) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet (Form NIFA-2009). Extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

##### **(b) Development Grants:**

Development Grants are intended to assist organizations: (1) to sustain and enhance important collaborations and innovative activities relevant to beginning farmer and rancher programs; and (2) to initiate and develop beginning farmer and rancher project ideas to lead to future program success or success in obtaining other grants for beginning farmer and rancher education. Development grants are only available to organizations that submit an application for a Standard Grant, and have not previously been successful in obtaining a competitive grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture [or its predecessor the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)].

A Standard BFRDP Project application that is considered meritorious but ranks below the funding line during the peer review process may be considered for a Development Grant, if the applicant is eligible. Applicants should indicate in the first line of the abstract of a Standard Grant proposal whether the organization would want the application to also be considered for a Development Grant, and if so, include a letter from the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) stating that the organization has never received a competitive award from NIFA (or its predecessor CSREES). A limited number of Development Grants will be awarded.

Development Grants are generally awarded for one (1) year, however in the case of any no-cost extension(s) of time, all work must be completed within three (3) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is three (3) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet (Form NIFA-2009). Extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

## **2. Educational Enhancement Team Projects:**

The long-term goals of the Educational Enhancement Team (EET) projects are to identify gaps in beginning farmer and rancher training by evaluating all existing programs, and to develop and conduct train-the-trainer projects to address these gaps. The Educational Enhancement Teams will periodically collect and analyze information on the impacts of the beginning farmer and rancher programs on specific audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers based on crop or regional diversity, including access and suitability of programs to veteran farmers and ranchers and to limited resource and/or socially disadvantaged beginning farmers and ranchers and farm workers desiring to become farmers or ranchers. The Team also may support special projects for training, coordination, and communication networks, including outreach and assistance to socially disadvantaged and/or underserved customers and other clientele groups with particular beginning farmer and rancher education and training needs. To maintain regional balance, priority will be given to applications serving beginning farmer and rancher audiences not served by previously funded Educational Enhancement Teams.

EETs are awarded for up to four years, and may continue into a fifth year with a no-cost extension of time. All work must be completed within five (5) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is five (5) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet (Form NIFA-2009). Extensions of time beyond the five (5) years will not be permitted.

## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Applications may only be submitted by a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities. These collaborations may include the following entities: State Cooperative Extension Services; Federal, State, or tribal agencies; community based organizations; nongovernmental organizations; junior and four-year colleges or universities or foundations maintained by a college or university; private for-profit organizations; and other appropriate partners. Inclusion of beginning and/or non-beginning farmers and ranchers as part of the collaborative group is strongly encouraged.

Applications submitted by individuals, or by organizations that do not involve other entities in a network or partnership, are not eligible for consideration under any category applicable to the BFRDP.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Pursuant to the authorizing legislation for the BFRDP, NIFA requires that in order to receive an award under this program, the recipient must provide a match in the form of cash or in-kind contributions in an amount at least equal to 25 percent (25%) of the federal funds provided by the award. The matching funds must be from non-Federal sources except when authorized by statute. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured with letters of commitment. For third party cash or in-kind support, letters of commitment must be submitted on donor organization letterhead, must include the signature of the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR), must identify the project, by name and purpose, what the funds will support, and must state the exact amount of the matching funds or value of the in-kind support that will be contributed.

There can be no stipulations on the matching amount.

## PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

### New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2. below to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide”.

### Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number

**Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-BFR-004835** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

**If you require assistance to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support  
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035  
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).  
Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):  
Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

## **B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). It contains important requirements such as minimum font and margin size, and key instructions and tips for preparing and submitting your application. The following is **additional information** needed to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

**Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or that attachments are in PDF format; see Part III section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).**

Grants.gov provides online tools to assist if you do not own PDF-generating software. You will find PDF conversion software at <http://test.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

**For any questions related to the preparation of an application,** review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: [electronic@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:electronic@nifa.usda.gov)
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

**1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**3. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.** The summary should include the title, a list of PDs and Co-PDs and their institutions, and concise (250 words or less) description of the project goals, plans to accomplish the goals and relevance of the project to the goals of BFRDP. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

**b. Field 8. Project Narrative.**

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 16 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced. This total includes pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (16 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following, in the sequence as specified below. Organizing your proposal in this way, and clearly labeling each section as indicated below, will help reviewers find the information to evaluate your proposal.

- 1) **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project. Justify the need for the program by identifying the target audience and explaining their needs (size, region, value of sales, structure of the industry (the number of small, medium and large farms), critical barriers, etc.); and by briefly summarizing all the other similar beginning farmer and rancher education and training programs that are available for the identified target audience. If you want the application to be considered under either of the set-aside target audiences (military veterans or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers), state what percentage of your budget will be allocated to serving the target group(s). If necessary, provide a map of the region. Show evidence that beginning farmers and ranchers were involved in conceptualizing the project and designing the activities. If the project type is Educational Enhancement Team, present

the rationale for the geographic, topic or other appropriate focus of the Team and the Team's composition. All works cited should be referenced (see 7(i) Bibliography & References Cited in this section). Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section.

- 2) **Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Provide numbers of beginning farmers and ranchers that will be served. Estimate how many of them will attain specific, anticipated knowledge gains or actions (e.g., starting farming; improving production practices; entering new markets) and project the expected resulting impacts of those gains and actions on the success of their operations. Discuss whether and how this program can be adapted to other regions, communities and/or agricultural systems. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section.
- 3) **Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 6 of the 16 pages for this section. Specifically, this section must include:
  - a) A description of the activities proposed for each objective;
  - b) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project;
  - c) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience;
  - d) For Standard BFRDP Projects: how will the beginning farmers and ranchers be recruited for this training?;
  - e) For Education Enhancement Team Projects, how will Beginning Farmer And Rancher Curricula and Programs be identified and evaluated? How will you help guide curriculum and program development and delivery in future years?;
  - f) How will the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant?
  - g) Any novel ideas or contributions of the proposed project;
  - h) Pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to proposed procedures. For Standard BFRDP Projects, please identify possible challenges to your proposed strategy for participant recruitment and how you plan to address those challenges.
- 4) **Personnel and Resources:** Describe in detail the key project personnel's experience in serving the identified or other audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers and ability to provide the appropriate (e.g., effective, socio-economically and culturally sensitive, etc.) education, training, outreach and mentoring programs for the target audience. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, and their impacts. This information may include the years and locations of prior activities, number of training assistance or education activities previously carried out, number of participants and graduates from the program, success rate in completing the program, percentage of graduates who are still in farming, percentages of those who improved their operations, etc. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section.

- 5) **Plan for Outcome Based Reporting.** Clearly identify a minimum of two expected outcomes of the project within the life of the project, and how you plan to document and evaluate them. Third-party evaluators are encouraged but not required. All projects should describe methods and resources for documenting and evaluating their outcomes and impacts. Because of the diversity in the types of BFRDP projects funded, it is not possible to require all applicants to report on two identical measurable outcomes. However, all Standard BFRDP applicants are strongly recommended to consider using the expected number of new farm startups that would result from their project as one of the outcomes, and the expected number of new farmers (i.e., those are already farming but in their first 10 years of operation) who will make beneficial changes as a result of the project. All projects are also encouraged to have measures of the degree of change or strength of impact or benefit to participants. The identified outcomes and impacts must be measurable as a total number, percentage of participation, or percentage change (e.g., percentage increase in the value of sales of beginning farmers and ranchers, or percentage of participants who improve their business or production practices). Taking baseline measurements before the work of a project or each measured event is recommended. Additionally, total numbers used to develop percentage should be captured for each measurement. All Educational Enhancement Team applicants are strongly recommended to consider using the anticipated reach (number of users) of information products created as a result of their Educational Enhancement Team activities as one of their metrics. Because many expected outcomes occur only beyond the grant period, also identify measurable outputs for each of the expected outcomes. Outputs for Standard BFRDP Projects may include: (a) Number of beginning farmers and ranchers to receive significant training or assistance, (b) number of courses developed, etc. Outputs for Educational Enhancement Teams may include: (a) number of trainers trained; (b) number of training programs offered; (c) number of BFRDP organizations assisted; etc. See the “Outcomes Guide for BFRDP Grants” and “Webinar #3 – Outcomes Reporting” at [www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html) for more information. **An applicant’s failure to provide the requested information in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting would impact the peer review process;** applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section.
- 6) **Management and Collaboration Plan.** Because of the complexity of the BFRDP projects, it is important to have a clearly articulated management plan that describes the roles and functions of all partners (e.g., Project Directors and Co-Project Directors) and collaborators and their organizations as they relate to the proposed project. Include time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance and partnerships. Describe your plans for coordination, communication, data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of your organization and your partners to this project and how the project will be sustained beyond the period of the award. An applicant’s failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award. **Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section.** In addition, letters of commitment signed by the AR of the partnering organization

demonstrating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan** should be provided (see “Other Attachments” below).

- 7) **Additional Pages.** In addition to the 16-page Narrative, proposals may use additional pages to provide the sections specified below if their proposals are of certain types:
- i. **Response to Previous Review** – Required for “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B of this RFA, “Types of Applications”. PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page, under a subheading “Response to Previous Review”**.
  - ii. **Accomplishment-Based Renewal** – Required for “Renewal Applications” as described under Part II, B of this RFA, “Types of Applications”. It should include a description of what was learned from the past project, what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into the renewal application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals. This information should be added at the end of the narrative, in **no more than one page, under a subheading “Accomplishment-Based Renewal”**.

**c. Field 9. Bibliography & References Cited – PDF attachment. No page limit.** if any references were cited in the Narrative, include their citations in this attachment. Title the attachment “Bibliography and References” in the document header and save the file as ‘Bibliography’.

**d. Field 12. Other Attachments**

- 1) **Commitment Letters – PDF attachment(s). No page limit.** Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the AR of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan**, and signed letters from each source of **matching funds** indicating the amount of funds committed to this project in the content of the letter, are required. See section 6. R&R Budget Federal and Non-Federal, subsection f.-Matching for details on how to document matching funds. Letters from other collaborators whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment – Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘LetterofCommitment\_OrganizationName’. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included.
- 2) **Past Performance (Progress Report) – PDF attachment. No page limit.** Title the attachment as ‘Past Performance’ in the document and save the file as ‘PastPerformance’. This requirement applies only to “Renewal Applications” as described under Part II, B of this RFA, “Types of Applications,” and should include the most current report submitted to NIFA’s web-based reporting system with the annual or final outcomes and impacts for each objective of the previous BFRDP grant.

- 3) **Appendices to Project Narrative –PDF Attachment.** This attachment is optional, and may be included in any proposal. Title the attachment as ‘Appendices’ in the document header and save file as ‘Appendices’.

Appendices are strictly limited to two (2) examples of materials from previous projects similar to those proposed in this project, no more than ten (10) pages total. These may include:

- o Reprints (papers that have been published in journals or periodicals);
- o Preprints (manuscripts in press for journals or periodicals);
- o Examples of curricula or training products (limited to 5 pages each, truncate if necessary); or
- o Media articles describing training projects and their outcomes.

#### **4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the Guide includes information about the people who require a Senior/Key Person Profile, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support, including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

**5. R&R Personal Data** – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

**6. R&R Budget Federal and Non-Federal -** This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

- a. Complete one R&R Budget Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget for the entire project. There should be reasonable costs in each Educational Enhancement Team Project budget that reflect the cost of monthly conference calls to facilitate the activities of the Clearinghouse.
- b. Field A. **Senior/Key Person.** This section identifies names of senior/key personnel. Each person identified in the senior/key person profile who is an employee of the applying organization must be listed in this section if funds are requested. Base salary/wages, base months (calendar or academic) and fringe benefit information must be included.
- c. Field D. **Travel.** The budgets for both Standard BFRDP and Education Enhancement Team projects should include the travel costs for the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) to attend the annual Project Director meeting beginning in the first year of funding and during each year of their project.
- d. Field H. **Indirect Costs** – Refer to Part IV, D of this RFA for a discussion of the limitations on claiming indirect costs.

- e. Field K. **Budget Justification – PDF Attachment. No page limit.** Title the attachment as ‘Budget Justification’ in the document header and save the file as ‘BudgetJustification.’
- 1) All budget categories, with the exception of Indirect Costs, for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget and linked to the different activities in the work plan. If consulting, collaborative, or sub contractual arrangements are included in the application, these arrangements should be fully explained and justified. The rate of pay for any consultant must be included, if known at the time of application. Please include a cost breakdown for the consultant, including the letter of commitment, curriculum vita, number of days in service, travel, and per diem, as well as the rate of pay.
  - 2) **To receive priority for partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or School-Based Agricultural Education Organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer and training outreach, applicants need to identify in the budget justification which budget items are being allocated out of Federal funds to the NGO(s), CBO(s) and/or SAEO(s).**
- f. **Matching:** As stated in Part III, B of this RFA, all applicants are required to provide from non-Federal sources (unless otherwise specified by law) cash or in-kind contributions in an amount at least equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the Federal funds requested. All matching contributions must be specifically for the project objectives as proposed. **The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant organization should be summarized on a separate page and placed in Field 12 ‘Other Attachments’ of the R & R Other Project Information form.** Title the attachment ‘SummaryofMatchingSupport’ in the document header and save the file as “SummaryofMatchingSupport’. Include the matching amount, the budget category for the match, and detail how the matching support, from each source, will be used (e.g., salary and position supported). A separate budget justification with the same level of details required for Federal funds should be included. This document should explain how non-Federal funds will be used in the project. See instructions in Field H on the R&R Budget Form for restrictions on the use of indirect costs as matching contributions.
- 1) **Cash and non-cash contributions from the institution and any third parties should be identified.**
  - 2) **Each source of non-Federal matching funds must be accompanied by written verification of commitments of matching support** (i.e., a signed letter from the AR of the source of matching funds; including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Include each of these signed letters of commitment in pdf format as attachments in Field 12 of the R & R Other Project Information form (see Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide).  
Written verification means:

For any third party cash contributions, a separate letter of commitment for each donation submitted on donor organization letterhead and signed by the AR of the donor organization, which must include:

- (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor;
- (2) the name of the applicant organization;
- (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made;
- (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and
- (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate letter of commitment for each contribution submitted on donor organization letterhead and signed by the AR of the donor organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution (please provide the basis for the good faith effort (i.e., duties and position being paid)); and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period. In-kind donations of salaries or equipment use should provide details of how the rate charged was determined. Donations of labor should be charged at the person's hourly rate of pay for similar work or for the rate that is customary for that type of work in the area.

c) In-kind salary contributions should include the name and position of the employee, the normal hourly rate of pay for this position, the number of hours the employee will be donating toward the project, and a brief description of the job this person will be performing for the project.

d) If the contribution is to be split between cash and in-kind, the exact dollar amount for each category must be clearly stated. The letter should also clearly state the budget categories that the contributed dollars should be applied to and clearly state the individual items of in-kind contributions. All pledge agreements must be placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support. Any cost sharing commitments specified in the application will be referenced and included as a condition of an award resulting from this announcement. All pledged amounts must be specific and certain, not estimated.

- 3) The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments, A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations, and the cost principles in the Federal Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR 31.2 for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

## **7. R & R Budget Subaward Federal and Non-Federal Attachment(s) Form**

If a formal subcontract agreement is needed with another organization(s), annual and cumulative budgets and a budget justification will be required for each subcontract agreement. Refer to Part V, 8. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions on completing this form.

### **7. Supplemental Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name and the program code according to the chart below. Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

<b>Proposal Type</b>	<b>Program Code Name</b>	<b>Program Code</b>
Standard Grant	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard	BFRDA
Educational Enhancement Team	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement	BFRDB

- b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

### **C. Submission Dates and Times**

Prior to electronic submission of the application via Grants.gov, it is strongly recommended that an administrative review be conducted to ensure that the application complies with all application preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

**Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.**

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on March 13, 2015.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

**If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.**

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the

applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel.**

**Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

#### **D. Funding Restrictions**

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs for grants to 22 percent (22%) of the total Federal funds provided under each award. However, Section 7409 of the Agriculture Act of 2014 limits indirect costs for Standard Grants to 10 percent (10%) of the total Federal funds provided under each Standard Grant award.

Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to 10 percent (10%) of the total funds requested for a Standard Grant proposal and otherwise (i.e., if an EET proposal), to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent (22%) of total Federal funds awarded.

**Claiming of indirect costs. The maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award budget or, alternatively, the maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed as a matching contribution (if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget). However, the maximum allowed indirect costs may not be claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution, unless the total claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. An awardee may split the allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total percentage of indirect costs under the project does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. For example, for a standard grant, indirect costs are capped at 10 percent (10%), so the grantee may request 5 percent (5%) of the indirect costs on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution. Or, the grantee may request any other, similar percentage combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect cost rate for the type of grant requested.**

If your institution does not have, or cannot obtain, a negotiated rate, you should calculate an indirect cost rate in order to request indirect costs. You should calculate an indirect cost rate based on actual costs for the entire organization from the most recently completed accounting year. If no prior cost history exists, you should use budgeted costs for the entire organization. You should follow the example(s) found at:

[http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect\\_cost\\_process.html](http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect_cost_process.html) for information regarding this process.

You may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space."

An award made under this program may not be used for planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Program funds may not be used to buy land, match Individual Development Account funds, or purchase equipment for starting farm or ranch businesses. Program funds may not be used for research activities. Program funds may only be used for education, training, outreach and mentoring of beginning farmers and ranchers.

## **E. Other Submission Requirements**

**You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”**

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

## **PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. General**

We evaluate each application in a 2-part review process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

When each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of BFRDP will recommend that the project: (a) be approved for support from currently available funds or (b) be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

BFRDP reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

***Partnerships and Collaborations:*** To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities? Does the proposal include the necessary partners to meet the needs of the audience, and does it make appropriate use of the expertise and other strengths of each of the partners? Priority will be given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include NGOs, CBOs or SAEOs with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach. Only applications with a minimum of 25 percent (25%) of the Federal budget allocated to these partner organizations (i.e., NGOs, CBOs and SAEOs) will be given this priority. In addition, these partner organizations must have been involved and played an important role in the project design and development. Projects must also employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.

**Legislated Criteria:** All project applications submitted for funding shall be evaluated using the following criteria as provided by section 7405(c)(5) of FSRIA (7 U.S.C. 3319(c)(5), specifically:

- **Relevancy** – Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to yield improvements in and sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers as defined in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79). In addition, the relevancy can be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of beginning farmers and ranchers in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and the demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative training, outreach, mentoring and education programs that address these needs.
- **Technical merit** – will be evaluated on the basis of:
  - (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
  - (b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach (e.g., social, economic and cultural relevance, distance based versus face-to-face);
  - (c) Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
  - (d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
  - (e) Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
  - (f) Sustainability beyond the life of the grant; and
  - (g) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)
  - (h) **For Educational Enhancement Team applicants, this includes:** Adequacy of dissemination plans for evaluation reports, including number and description of activities planned for disseminating evaluation reports and new curricula.
- **Achievability** - Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. Importance will be given to the description of potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.
- **Expertise and track record of one (1) or more applicants** – Importance will be given to the demonstration of expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring and/or training beginning farmers and ranchers. The successful

multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of training, assistance, or education activities previously carried out; number of participants or graduates of the program, success rate and their current occupation; the number of years a program or activity has been offered. Also important are qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities and in evaluating project outcomes; and demonstrable institutional experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.

- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation.** Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education and outreach methods.
- **Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience.** Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified.

**Resubmitted and Renewal Applications:** Priority may be given to resubmitted or renewal applications that clearly demonstrate the potential to have significant impacts on beginning farmer and rancher development. Only renewal applications that clearly indicate successful performance during the prior grant and/or resubmitted applications that include the one additional page response to the previous review panel summary will be given priority. Renewal applications should not only have shown excellent performance but also have a strong plan for continuous improvement to be given priority consideration.

**Additional evaluation criteria for Resubmitted Applications:**

- **Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers and/or performance during the development grant.** Includes the response to the previous review panel summary and/or other pertinent information regarding performance during the development grant.

**Additional evaluation criteria for Renewal Applications are:**

- **Performance During the Previous BFRDP grant(s).** As indicated in the annual report submitted to the Agency and attached to the application. Includes achievement of outcomes and contributions to the BFRDP Clearinghouse described in the annual report.
- **Adequacy of Plans for Continuous Improvement.** Includes what was learned from the past project, what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into this application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.

**C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 555, Reston, VA, 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process, to the extent permitted by law; therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

#### **D. Organizational Management Information**

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

#### **E. Application Disposition**

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application; however, withdrawn applications normally will not be returned. One copy of each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by BFRDP for a period of three years.

## **PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

### **B. Award Notice**

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to which the director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number and the Federal Agency Identification Number assigned by NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

### **C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to the ones listed below.

2 CFR Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

2 CFR Part 400 —USDA implementation of 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

2 CFR Part 415 – USDA General Program Administrative Regulations.

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

2 CFR Part 180 and Part 417--OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and USDA Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

2 CFR Part 416—USDA General Program Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

2 CFR Part 418—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

2 CFR Part 421—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

2 CFR Part 422—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--  
General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA  
implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap  
in federally-assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by  
employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities,  
in federally-assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

44 U.S.C. 3541 et seq. (Pub. L. 107-347) - Federal Information System Security Management  
Act of 2002 (FISMA), to improve computer and network security within the Federal  
Government. Applies to awardees if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information  
on behalf of NIFA.

#### **D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

Grantees are to use REEport, NIFA's electronic, web-based inventory system to submit an initial  
project initiation which documents expected products, outcomes, and impacts of the project, as  
proposed in the Plan for Outcome-Based Reporting. Additionally, annual progress report  
documenting realized project outcomes must be submitted to the electronic system. The web-  
based system facilitates an electronic workflow between grantees and NIFA for project  
accomplishments to be easily searchable and allows for public access to information on  
Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements, including those specific  
to the annual and final technical reports, are included in the award terms and conditions.

If a project is funded, beginning in the first year of funding, the Project Director and any other  
key staff member(s) will be required to attend annual project director meetings. Reasonable  
travel expenses should be included as part of the project budget.

## PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts –

**Jill Auburn**

**Title:** National Program Leader

**Unit:** Division of Agricultural Systems

**Location:** 3430 Waterfront Centre

[Full Address and Directions](#)

**Phone:** (202) 720 - 2635

**Fax:** (202) – 401 - 6070

**Email:** [jauburn@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:jauburn@nifa.usda.gov)

Or

**Denis Ebodaghe**

**Title:** National Program Leader

**Unit:** Division of Agricultural Systems

**Location:** 3240 Waterfront Centre

[Full Address and Directions](#)

**Phone:** (202) 401 - 4385

**Fax:** (202) –401 - 1782

**Email:** [debodaghe@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:debodaghe@nifa.usda.gov)

Administrative/Business Contacts–

**Adriene Woodin**

**Title:** Branch Chief

**Unit:** Branch II

**Location:** 2182 Waterfront Centre

[Full Address and Directions](#)

**Phone:** (202) 401 - 4320

**Fax:** (202) 401 - 6271

**Email:** [awoodin@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:awoodin@nifa.usda.gov)

Or

**Susan Bowman**

**Title:** Branch Chief

**Unit:** Branch I

**Location:** 2240 Waterfront Centre

[Full Address and Directions](#)

**Phone:** (202) 401 - 4324

**Fax:** (202) 401 - 6271

**Email:** [sbowman@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:sbowman@nifa.usda.gov)

## **PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Access to Review Information**

We will send copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

### **B. Use of Funds; Changes**

#### **1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility**

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

#### **2. Changes in Project Plans**

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved goals or objectives prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests be approved for changes that are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel, prior to effecting such changes.

d. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not federal funds are involved, prior to instituting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. The terms and conditions of award include information about no-cost extensions of the award and when ADO's prior approval is necessary.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of

amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

### **C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **D. Regulatory Information**

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

### **E. Definitions**

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

In addition, the following definitions apply:

Beginning Farmer: a farmer, rancher, or operator of non-industrial private forestland who is in the first ten years of operation, or a person intending or aspiring to begin such an operation.

Collaborator: a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs): private, non-profit organizations that are representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that provide services to that local community.

Education: an act or process that delivers knowledge and informal educational programs to beginning farmers and ranchers, enabling them to make practical decisions.

Limited resource farmer or rancher: an operator of a farm or ranch that has both low levels of farm sales and low household income. See the USDA-ERS [\*Family Farm Report, 2010 Edition\*](#) for more information.

Military Veteran: a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): legally constituted, non-governmental organizations created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government and serving one or more communities.

Partnership: a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.

Performance target: a specific, verifiable change in people's actions or conditions. It defines how many people will change and what degree of change constitutes success.

Producer: an individual, family, or other entity in the U.S. engaged in the business of agriculture, crop, livestock, forestry, and range production, management and marketing.

Qualified Public and Private Entities: public or private groups, organizations, or institutions that have established and demonstrated capacities to conduct projects that accomplish the purposes of the program as designated in these guidelines.

Regions: (1) The Northeast region consists of the 12 Northeast States and the District of Columbia (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia); (2) The Southern Region consists of 13 States plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma); (3) The North Central Region consists of 12 States (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota); and (4) The Western Region consists of 12 States and the American Territories in the Pacific (Hawaii, Alaska, Washington State, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Micronesia).

Rural areas: all counties with a population under 50,000.

School-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs): organizations that deliver career and/or technical education in agriculture, which may include classroom and/or experiential learning, for example, FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), National Young Farmer Educational Organization, or other similar organizations.

Socially disadvantaged beginning farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group (i.e., a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic,

or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities) (7 U.S.C. 2003(e)).

Sustainable agriculture: a system of plant and/or animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term: satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

Veteran farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable. (See 7 U.S.C. 2279(e) for further details.)

## **F. Materials Available on the Internet**

BFRDP program information will be made available on the NIFA web site at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html>. The following are among the materials available on the web page:

1. Information for applicants
2. Program Details
3. Reviewer Information
4. Results and Impacts
5. Best Practices
6. Other (including grantee resources and stakeholder input)